THE LIGHT IN THE CLEARING

A TALE OF THE NORTH COUNTRY IN THE TIME OF SILAS WRIGHT

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KEEPING UP WITH LIZZIE, ETC., ETC

BART HEARS SOME STARTLING NEWS ABOUT THE SON OF THE MONEY LENDER.

Synopsis.—Barton Baynes, an orphan, goes to live with his uncle, Peabody Baynes, and his Aunt Deel on a farm on Rattleroad, in a neighborhood called Lickitysplit, about the year 1826. He meets Sally Dunkelberg, about his own age, but socially of a class above the Bayneses, and is fascinated by her pretty face and fine clothes. Barton also meets Roving Kate, known in the neighborhood as the "Silent Woman." Amos Grimshaw, a young son of the richest man in the township, is a visitor at the Baynes home and Roving Kate tells the boys' fortunes, predicting a bright future for Barton and death on the gallows for Amos. Barton meets Silas Wright, Jr., a man prominent in public affairs, who evinces much interest in the boy. Barton learns of the power of money when Mr. Grimshaw threatens to take the Baynes farm unless a note which he holds is paid. Now in his sixteenth year, Barton, on his way to the post office at Canton, meets a stranger and they ride together. They encounter a highwayman, who shoots and kills the stranger. Barton's horse throws him and runs away. As the murderer bends over the stranger Barton throws a stone, which he observes wounds the thief, who makes off at once. A few weeks later Bart leaves home to enter Michael Hacket's school at Canton.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

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"There comes Colonel Hand," said Mrs. Hacket as she looked out of the window. "The poor lonely Whig! He has nothing to do these days but sit around the tavern."

Colonel Hand was a surly-looking man beyond middle age, with large eyes that showed signs of dissipation. He had a small, dark tuft beneath his lower lip and thin, black, untidy hair.

"What do ye think has happened?" he asked as he looked down upon us with a majestic movement of his hand. "The son o' that old Bucktail, Ben Grimshaw, has been arrested and brought to jail for murder."

"For murder?" asked Mr. and Mrs. Hacket in one breath.

"For bloody murder, sir," the colonel went on. "It was the shooting of that man in the town o' Ballybeen a few weeks ago. Things have come to a pretty pass in this country, I should say. Talk about law and order; we don't know what it means here and why should we? The party in power is avowedly opposed to it—yes, sir. It has fattened upon bribery and corruption. Do you think that the son o' Ben Grimshaw will receive punishment even if he is proved guilty? Not at all. He will be protected—you mark my words."

He bowed and left us. When the door had closed behind him Mr. Hacket said:

"Another victim horned by the Snapdragon! If a man were to be slain by a bear back in the woods Colonel Hand would look for guilt in the opposition party. Michael Henry, whatever the truth may be regarding the poor boy in jail, we are in no way responsible. Away with sadness! What is that?"

Mr. Hacket inclined his ear and then added: "Michael Henry says that he may be innocent and that we had better go and see if we can help him. Now I hadn't thought o' that. Had you, Mary?"

"No," the girl answered.

"We must be letting Mike go ahead of us always," said her father. "You saw the crime, I believe," turning to me.

I told them all I knew of it.

"Upon my word, I like you, my brave lad," said the schoolmaster. "I heard of all this and decided that you would be a help to Michael Henry and a creditable student. Come, let us go and pay our compliments to the senator."

The schoolmaster and I went over to Mr. Wright's house—a white, frame building which had often been pointed out to me.

Mrs. Wright, a fine-looking lady who met us at the door, said that the senator had gone over to the mill with his wheelbarrow.

"We've plenty of time and we'll wait for him," said the schoolmaster.

"I see him!" said little John as he and Ruth ran to the gate and down the rough plank walk to meet him.

We saw him coming a little way down the street in his shirt-sleeves with his barrow in front of him. He stopped and lifted little John in his arms, and after a moment put him down and embraced Ruth.

"Well, I see ye still love the tender embrace o' the wheelbarrow," said Mr. Hacket as we approached the senator.

"My embrace is the tenderer of the two," the latter laughed with a look at his hands.

He recognized me and seized my two hands and shook them as he said:

"Upon my word, here is my friend Bart. I was not looking for you here."

He put his hand on my head, now higher than his shoulder, and said: "I was not looking for you here."

He asked about my aunt and uncle and expressed joy at learning that I was now under Mr. Hacket.

"I shall be here for a number of weeks," he said, "and I shall want to see you often. Maybe we'll go hunting some Saturday."

We bade him good morning and he went on with his wheelbarrow, which was loaded, I remember, with stout sacks of meal and flour.

We went to the school at half past eight. What a thrilling place it was with its 78 children and its three rooms. How noisy they were as they waited in the schoolyard for the bell to ring! I stood by the doorside looking very foolish, I dare say, for I knew not what to do with myself. My legs encased in the tow breeches felt as if they were on fire. I saw that most of the village boys wore boughten clothes and fine boots. I looked down at my own leather and was a tower of shame on a foundation of greased cowhide. Sally Dunkelberg came in with some other girls and pretended not to see me. That was the hardest blow I suffered.

Among the handsome, well-dressed boys of the village was Henry Wills—the boy who had stolen my watermelon. I had never forgiven him for that or for the killing of my little hen. The bell rang and we marched into the big room, while a fat girl with crinkly hair played on a melodeon. Henry and another boy tried to shove me out of line and a big paper wad struck the side of my head as we were marching in and after we were seated a cross-eyed, freckled girl in a red dress made a face at me.

It was, on the whole, the unhappiest day of my life. During recess I slapped a boy's face for calling me a rabbit and the two others who came

I Saw a Face and Figure Behind the Grated Door of One of These Cells.

to help him went away full of fear and astonishment, for I had the strength of a young moose in me those days. After that they began to make friends with me.

In the noon hour a man came to me in the schoolyard with a subpena for the examination of Amos Grimshaw and explained its meaning.

While I was talking with this man Sally passed me walking with another girl and said:

"Hello, Bart!"

I observed that Henry Wills joined them and walked down the street at the side of Sally. I got my first pang of jealousy then.

When school was out that afternoon Mr. Hacket said I could have an hour to see the sights of the village, so I set out, feeling much depressed. I walked toward the house of Mr. Wright and saw him digging potatoes in the garden and went in. I knew that he was my friend.

"Well, Bart, how do you like school?" he asked.

"Not very well," I answered.

"Of course not! It's new to you now, and you miss your aunt and uncle. Stick to it. You'll make friends and get interested before long."

"I want to go home," I declared.

"Now let's look at the compass," he suggested. "You're lost for a minute, and like all lost people you're heading the wrong way. Don't be misled by selfishness. Forget what you want to do and think of what we want you to do. We want you to make a man of yourself. You must do it for the sake of those dear people who have done so much for you. The needle points toward the schoolhouse yonder."

He went on with his work, and as I walked away I understood that the needle he referred to was my conscience.

I went about my chores. There was to be no more wavering in my conduct. At the supper table Mr. Hacket kept us laughing with songs and jests and stories. The boy John, having been reproved for rapid eating, hurled his spoon upon the floor.

"Those in favor of his punishment will please say aye?" said the schoolmaster.

I remember that we had a divided house on that important question.

The schoolmaster said: "Michael Henry wishes him to be forgiven on promise of better conduct, but for the next offense he shall ride the badger."

This meant lying for a painful moment across his father's knee.

The promise was given and our merrymaking resumed. The district attorney, whom I had met before, came to see me after supper and asked more questions and advised me to talk with no one about the shooting without his consent. Soon he went away, and after I had learned my lessons Mr. Hacket said:

"Let us walk up to the jail and spend a few minutes with Amos."

We hurried to the jail. The sheriff, a stout-built, stern-faced man, admitted us.

"Can we see the Grimshaw boy?" Mr. Hacket inquired.

"I guess so," he answered as he lazily rose from his chair and took down a bunch of large keys which had been hanging on the wall. "His father has just left."

He spoke in a low, solemn tone which impressed me deeply as he put a lighted candle in the hand of the schoolmaster. He led us through a door into a narrow corridor. He thrust a big key into the lock of a heavy iron grating and threw it open and bade us step in. We entered an ill-smelling stone-floored room with a number of cells against its rear wall. He locked the door behind us. I saw a face and figure in the dim candle light, behind the grated door of one of these cells. How lonely and dejected and helpless was the expression of that figure! The sheriff went to the door and unlocked it.

"Hello, Grimshaw," he said sternly. "Step out here."

It all went to my heart—the manners of the sheriff so like the cold iron of his keys and doors—the dim candle light, the pale, frightened youth who walked toward us. We shook his hand and he said that he was glad to see us. I saw the scar under his left ear and reaching out upon his cheek, which my stone had made, and knew that he bore the mark of Cain.

He asked if he could see me alone and the sheriff shook his head and said sternly:

"Against the rules."

"Amos, I've a boy o' my own an' I feel for ye," said the schoolmaster. "I'm going to come here, now and then, to cheer ye up and bring ye some books to read. If there's any word of advice I can give ye—let me know. Have ye a lawyer?"

"There's one coming tomorrow."

"Don't say a word about the case, boy, to anyone but your lawyer—mind that."

We left him and went to our home and beds, I to spend half the night thinking of my discovery, since which, for some reason, I had no doubt of the guilt of Amos, but I spoke not of it to anyone and the secret worried me.

Next morning on my way to school I passed a scene more strange and memorable than any in my long experience. I saw the shabby figure of old Benjamin Grimshaw walking in the side path. His hands were in his pockets, his eyes bent upon the ground, his lips moving as if he were in deep thought. Roving Kate, the ragged, silent woman who, for the fortune of Amos, had drawn a gibbet, the shadow of which was now upon him, walked slowly behind the money lender pointing at him with her bony forefinger. Her stern eyes watched him as the cat watches when its prey is near it. She did not notice me. Silently, her feet wrapped in rags, she walked behind the man, always pointing at him. When he stopped she stopped. When he resumed his slow progress she followed. It thrilled me, partly because I had begun to believe in the weird, mysterious power of the Silent Woman. I had twenty minutes to spare and so I turned into the main street behind and close by them. I saw him stop and buy some crackers and an apple and a piece of cheese. Meanwhile she stood pointing at him. He saw, but gave no heed to her. He walked along the street in front of the stores, she following as before. How patiently she followed!

I started for the big schoolhouse and a number of boys joined me with pleasant words.

Sally ran past us with that low-lived Wills boy, who carried her books for her. His father had gone into the grocery business and Henry wore boughten clothes. I couldn't tell Sally how mean he was. I was angry and decided not to speak to her until she spoke to me. I got along better in school, although there was some tittering when I recited, probably because I had a broader dialect and bigger boots than the boys in the village.

CHAPTER IX.

I Meet President Van Buren and Am Cross-Examined by Mr. Grimshaw.

The days went easier after that. The boys took me into their play and some of them were most friendly. I had a swift foot and a good eye as well as a strong arm, and could hold my own at three old cat—a kind of baseball which we played in the schoolyard. Saturday came. As we were sitting down at the table that morning the younger children clung to the knees of Mr. Hacket and begged him to take them up the river in a boat.

"Good Lord! What wilt thou give me when I grow childless?" he exclaimed with his arms around them. "That was the question of Abraham, and it often comes to me. Of course we shall go. But hark! Let us hear what the green chair has to say."

There was a moment of silence and then he went on with a merry laugh. "Right ye are, Michael Henry! You are always right, my boy—God bless your soul! We shall take Bart with us an' doughnuts an' cheese an' cookies an' dried meat for all."

From that moment I date the beginning of my love for the occupant of the green chair in the home of Michael Hacket. Those good people were Catholics and I a Protestant and yet this Michael Henry always insisted upon the most delicate consideration for my faith and feelings.

"I promised to spend the morning in the field with Mr. Wright, if I may have your consent, sir," I said.

"Then we shall console ourselves, knowing that you are in better company," said Mr. Hacket.

Mr. Dunkelberg called at the house in Ashery lane to see me after breakfast.

"Bart, if you will come with me I should like to order some store clothes and boots for you," he said in his squeaky voice.

For a moment I knew not how to answer him. Nettled as I had been by Sally's treatment of me, the offer was like rubbing ashes on the soreness of my spirit.

I blushed and surveyed my garments and said:

"I guess I look pretty bad, don't I?"

"You look all right, but I thought maybe you would feel better in softer raiment, especially if you care to go around much with the young people. I am an old friend of the family and I guess it would be proper for me to buy the clothes for you. When you are older you can buy a suit for me, some time, if you care to."

It should be understood that well-to-do people in the towns were more particular about their dress those days than now.

"I'll ask my aunt and uncle about it," I proposed.

"That's all right," he answered. "I'm going to drive to your house this afternoon and your uncle wishes you to go with me. We are all to have a talk with Mr. Grimshaw."

He left me and I went over to Mr. Wright's.

They told me that he was cutting corn in the back lot, where I found him.

"Mr. Dunkelberg came this morning and wanted to buy me some new clothes and boots," I said.

The senator stopped work and stood looking at me with his hands upon his hips.

"I wouldn't let him do it if I were you," he said thoughtfully.

Just then I saw a young man come running toward us in the distant field.

Mr. Wright took out his compass.

"Look here," he said, "you see the needle points due north."

He took a lodestone out of his pocket, and holding it near the compass moved it back and forth. The needle followed it.

The young man came up to us breathing deeply. Perspiration was rolling off his face. He was much excited and spoke with some difficulty.

"Senator Wright," he gasped, "Mrs. Wright sent me down to tell you that President Van Buren is at the house."

I remember vividly the look of mild amusement in the senator's face and the serene calmness with which he looked at the young man and said to him:

"Tell Mrs. Wright to make him comfortable in our easiest chair and to say to the president that I shall be up directly."

Grimshaw seeks by an offer of a bribe to Uncle Peabody to prevent Bart from telling what he knows about the guilt of Amos. How Uncle Peabody and Bart received this offer is told in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Buoyed by Glorious Faith.

What a world were this; how unendurable its weight, if they whom death had sundered did not meet again!—Southey.

Her Happiest Days.

The other day a lady confided to us that the happiest days of her life were spent during the three years that she was eighteen.—Boston Transcript.

Sooner or later the weak man finds himself up to his neck in the slough of despair.

Everything Lovely.

"Howdy, Gap!" saluted an acquaintance, upon meeting the well known Rampus Ridge citizen on a shopping expedition in Tumblnville. "How's everything going with you?"

"Finer'n frog hair, Jurd!" triumphantly replied Gap Johnson. "Of course, my wife has been sorter puny, yur of late, and several of the children have got the measles and mumps and one thing and another, and the lightning struck the corner of the house tuther night and like to have tore the whole place to pieces, and one of the kids fell out of a tree and broke his arm, and a feller took a shot at me day before yesterday and ventilated my ear, and such as that, but I swapped for a running horse last week, and a couple of my hounds have got six pups apiece. Aw, I tell you, they can't keep a good man down!"—Kansas City Star.

Well Known.

I was hurrying home up the hill when a little boy came rushing down in such haste that he ran headlong into me. He was quite breathless and very flushed.

"Have you seen my pa?" he managed to stammer.

"I don't know your pa, little boy," said I.

He looked at me in round-eyed wonder and his pink cheeks fairly stuck out.

"You don't know my pa?" he said incredulously. "Why, I know pa just as easy!"—Exchange.

KNEW THAT WOULD STOP HIM

Lawyer Evidently Was Well Acquainted With the Weakness of His Long-Winded Friend.

C. H. Murphy relates the story of a Philadelphia lawyer, retired, who, in the days of his active practice, was notorious for his long-windedness.

On one occasion he had been spouting forth his concluding argument for six hours, and the end was nowhere in sight, when the opposing attorney beckoned his associate and whispered:

"Can't you stop him, Jack?"

"I'll stop him in two minutes," Jack replied confidently. And he wrote and passed to the orator the following note:

"My Dear Colonel—As soon as you finish your magnificent argument I would like you to join me at the hotel in a bumper of rare old Bourbon."

The lawyer halted in the midst of an impassioned period, put on his glasses, and read the note that had been handed him, then he removed his glasses again and, taking up his hat and bag, he said:

"And now, may it please the court and gentlemen of the jury, I leave the case with you."

A minute later he was proceeding in stately fashion in the direction of the hotel bar.

Who'd do the work of the world if everybody were rich?